

SERMON
PREACHED AT S^t MA-
RIES OXFORD VPON
TUESDAY IN EASTER
WEEKE, 1617.

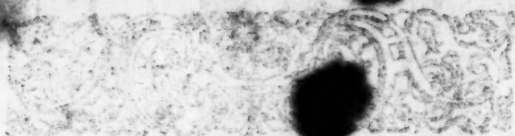
CONCERNING THE ABUSES
*of obscure and difficult places of holy
Scripture, and remedies a-
gainst them.*

By JOHN HALES,
FELLOW OF ETON COLLEDGE,
and *Regius Professour* of the Greeke
tongue in the Vniversitie
of Oxford.



AT OXFORD

Printed by Iohn Lichfield, and William Wrench,
Printers to the famous Vniversitie. 1617.



10-11-68





2. PETER. 3. 16.

*which the vnlearned and vnstable wrest, as they doe
the other Scriptures, vnto their owne destruction.*



HE loue and fauour which
it pleased God to beare our
Fathers before the law, so
farre preuail'd with him, as
that without any bookes &
writings, by familiar and
frendly conuersing with the,
and communicating himselfe vnto them, he made
them receaue and vnderstand his lawes: their in-
ward conceits & intellectualls being after a won-
derfull manner as it were *Figured*, and *Characterd*,
(as *St Basil* expresses it) by his spirit, so that they
could not but see, and consent vnto, and confesse
the truth of them. Which way of manifesting his
will, vnto many other gracious priuiledges which
it had, aboue that which in after ages came in
place of it, had this added, that it brought with it
vnto the man, to whom it was made, a preseruation
on against all doubt and hesitancy, a full assurance
both who the author was, and how farre his in-

In Psalms.

Hom. 1. in Mat.

L. 3. Epist. 106.

tent and meaning reacht. Wee therefore their offering ought, as *St Chrysostome* tells vs, so to haue demaend our selues, that it might haue been with vs as it was with them, that wee might haue had no need of writing, no other teacher but the spirit, no other books but our hearts, no other means to haue beene taught the things of God. *Nisi inspirationis diuinae internam suauitatem, doctrinam, ubi sine sonis sermonum & sine elementis literarum, eo dulcius quo secretius veritas loquitur*; as saith *Fulgentius*. *ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΕΙΤΕ ΤΩ ΚΑΙΝΟ ΛΟΓΩ*, saith *Isidorus Pelusiota*: for it is a great argument of our shame & imperfection that the holy things are written in bookes. For as God in anger tells the Iewes, that he himselfe would not goe before them as hither-to he had done, to conduct them into the promised land, but would leaue his Angell with them as his deputie: so hath he dealt with vs, the vnhappy posteritie degenerated from the ancient puritie of our forefathers. When himselfe refused to speake vnto our hearts because of the hardnesse of them, he then began to put his lawes in writing. Which thing for a long time amongst his owne people seemes not, to haue brought with it any sensible inconuenience. For amongst all those acts of the Iewes, which God in his booke hath registred for our instruction, there is not one concerning any pretended ambiguitie or obscuritie of the Text & Letter of their Law, which might drawe them in to faction and schisme; the Diuell belike hauing other

ther sufficient advantages on which he wrought. But ever since the Gospell was committed to writing, what age, what monument of the Churches acts is not full of debate and strife, concerning the force & meaning of those writings, which the holy Ghost hath left vs to be the law & rule of faith? *S^t Paul*, one of the first penmen of the holy Ghost, who in *Paradise* heard wordes which it was not lawfull for man to vtter, hath left vs wordes in writing, which it is not safe for any man to be too busie to interpret. No sooner had hee laid downe his penne, almost ere the inke was drie, were there found *Syllabarum aucupes*, such as *S^t Ambrose* spake of, *qui nescire aliqui derubescunt, & per occasionem obscuritatis tendunt laqueos deceptionis*, who thought there could be no greater disparagement vnto them, then to seeme to bee ignorant of any thing, and vnder pretense of interpreting obscure places laid gins to entrap the vncautelous: who taking advantage of the obscuritie of *S^t Pauls* text, made the letter of the Gospell of life and peace, the most forcible instrument of mortal quarrell & contention. The growth of which, the Holy Ghost by the Ministry of *S^t Peter*, hath indeavored to cut vp in the bud, and to strangle in the wombe, in this short admonition which but now hath sounded in your eares. *VV* hich the learned &c. In which wordes, for our more orderly proceeding, we will consider, First, the sinne it selfe that is heare reprehended; wresting of Scripture: where

we will breifly consider what it is, and what causes and motioners it findes in our corrupt vnderstandings. Secondly the persons guilty of this offence, decipher'd vnto vs in two Epithets, *unlearned, vnsutable*. Last of all the danger in the last words, *vnto their owne damnation*. And first of the sinne it selfe, together with some of the especiall causes of it.

They wrest. They deale with Scripture as Chimickes deale with naturall bodies, torturing them to extract that out of them which God and nature never put in them. Scripture is a rule which will not fit it selfe to the obliquitie of our conceits, but our perverle and crooked discourse, must fit it selfe to the straightnesse of that rule. A learned writer in the age of our fathers, commenting vpon Scripture spake most truely when hee laid, *that his Comments gaue no light vnto the text, the text gaue light vnto his Comments*. Other expofitions may giue rules & directions for vnderstanding their authors, but Scripture gives rules to exposition it selfe, and interprets the interpreter. Wherefore when wee wade in Scripture, *non pro sententia diuinarum Scripturarum*, as St Austine speaks, *sed pro nostra ita dimicantes vt tam velimus Scripturarum esse quae nostra est*: When we strue to giue vnto it, and not to receaue from it the sense: when wee factiously contend to fasten our conceits vpon God: and like the Harlot in the booke of Kings, take our dead and putrified fancies, and lay

Fabr.

Sam.

lay them in the bosome of Scripture as of a mother, then are we guiltie of this great sinne of wresting of Scripture. The nature of which will the better appeare, if wee consider a little, some of those motions which driue vs vpon it. One very potent and strong meane is the exceeding affection and loue vnto our owne opinions & conceits. For growne wee are vnto extremities on both hands: we cannot with patience either admit of other mens opinions, or endure that our owne should be withstood. As it was in the *Lacedemonian* army, almost all were Captaines: so in these disputes all will be leaders: and we take our selues to be much discountenanced, if others thinke not as we doe. So that the complaint which one makes, concerning the dissention of Physicians about the diseases of our bodies, is true likewise in these disputes which concerne the cure of our soules, *hinc illa circa agros misera sententiarum concertationes, nullo idem consensu, ne videatur accessio alterius.* From hence haue sprong those miserable contentions about the distemper of our soules, singulartie alone, and that wee will not seeme to stand as cyphars to make vp the summe of other mens opinions, being cause enough to make vs disagree. A fault anciently amongst the Christians so apparent, that it needed not an Apostolicall spirit to discover it, the very heathen themselves to our shame and confusion, haue iustly, judiciously, and sharply taxt vs for it. *Ammianus Marcellinus* passing

Scholiast. in
Thucyd.

Plinie.

sing his censure vpon *Constantinus* the Emperour:
Christianam religionem absolutam & simplicem (saith
 he: and they are words very well worth your mar-
 king) *Christianam religionem absolutam & simplicem*
anile superstitione confudit. In qua scrutanda perplex-
ius quam componenda grauius, excitauit dissidia plu-
rima, quae progressa fufius aluit concertatione verbo-
rum, dum ritum omnem ad suum trahere conatur ar-
bitrium. the Christian religion, a religion of great
 simplicitie and perfection, hee troubled with do-
 tage and superstition. For going about rather per-
 plexedly to search the controversies, then grauely
 to compose them, he raised great stirres, & by dis-
 puting spread them farre and wide, whilst he went
 about to make himselfe sole Lord & commander
 of the whole profession. Now (that it may appear
 wherefore I haue noted this) it is no hard thing
 for a man that hath wit, and is strongly posselt of
 an opinion, and resolute to maintaine it, to finde
 some places of Scripture, which by good hand-
 ling will be woed to cast a favourable countenance
 vpon it. *Pythagoras* Schollers hauing beene bred
 vp in the doctrine of numbers, when afterward
 they diuerted vpon the studies of nature, fancied
 vnto themselues somewhat in naturall bodies like
 vnto numbers, and therevpon fell into a conceit
 that numbers were the principles of them. So
 fares it with him that to the reading of Scripture
 comes forepossett with some opinion. As *Anti-*
pheron *Orites* in Aristotle thought that every
 where

where hee saw his owne shape and picture going
 afore him: so in diuers parts of Scripture where
 these men walke, they will easily perswade them-
 selues that they see the image of their owne con-
 ceits. It was, & is to this day, a fashion in the hor-
 ter countries, at noone, when the sunne is in his
 strength, to retire themselves to their Closets or
 beds, if they were at home, to coole & shadie pla-
 ces if they were abroad, to avoid the inconveni-
 ence of the heat of it. To this the Spouse in the
 Canticles alluding, calls after her beloued, as after
 a shepheard: *Shew me, O thou whom my soule loueth,*
wheresthou feedest thy flocke, wheresthou dost rest at
noone. The Donatists conceiting vnto themselves
 that the Church was shut vp in them alone; be-
 ing vrged by the fathers to shew how the Church
 being vniuersall, came on a suddaine thus to bee
 confined to Africke: they had presently their Scrip-
 ture for it: for so they found it written in the Can-
 ticles: *Iudica, quem diligit anima mea, ubi pascas, ubi*
cubes in meridie. In which text, *meridies* doubleffe
 as they thought, was their Southerne countrie of
 Africke, where the shepheard of Israel was, and
 no where else, to feed his flockes. I may not trou-
 ble you with instances in this kinde: little observa-
 tion is able to furnish the man of slenderest reading
 with abundance. The texts of Scripture which are
 especially subiect to this abuse, are those that are
 of ambiguous and doubtfull meaning. For as *Thy-
 ogydes* obserues of the fat and fertile places of
 B Greece

Greece, that they were evermore the occasions of stirres and seditions; the neighbouring nations every one striving to make it selfe Lord of them: so is it with these places that are so fertile, as it were, of interpretation, and yeeld a multiplicity of sense: they are the *Palæstra* for good wits to proue masteries in, where every one desires to bee Lord and absolute.

A second thing occasioning vs to transgresse against Scripture, and the discreet and sober handling of it, is our too quicke and speedy entrance vpon the practise of interpreting it, in our young and greene yeares, before that time & experience haue ripened vs and setled our conceits. For that which in all other businesse, and here likewise doth most especially commend vs, is our cautelous and wary handling it. But this is a flower seldome seen in youths garden. Aristotle differencing age and youth, makes it a propertie of youth, *utrum si sciam* *etiam, et si nesciam*, to suppose they knowe all things and to be bold in affirming: and the heathen Rhetorician could tel vs, that by this so speedy entring vpon action, and so timely venting our crude and vnconcocted studies, *quod est ubiq; perniciosissimū, præuenit vires sciencia*, a thing which in all cases is most pernicious, presumption is greater then strength, after the manner of those, who are lately recoverd out of some great sicknesse, in whome appetite is stronger then digestion. These are they who take the greatest mysteries of Christian religion

gion to bee the fittest arguments to spend themselves vpon. So *Eckius* in his *Chrysostomus*, a worke of his so tearmed; wherein he discusse the question of predestination, in the very entrance of his worke tells vs, that hee therefore enterpris'd to handle this argument, because forsooth hee thought it to be the fittest question in which hee might *Iuueniles calores exercere*. The ancient Masters of fence amongst the Romans were wont to set vp a post, and cause their young Schollers to practise vpon it, and to foine and fight with it, as with an aduersarie. Instead of a post, this young fencer hath set himselfe vp one of the deepest mysteries of our profession to practise his freshmanship vpon. Which qualitie when once it findes Scripture for his object, how great inconvenience it brings with it, needs no large discourse to proue. *St. Ierome*, a man not too easily brought on to acknowledge the errours of his writings, amongst thole few things which hee doth retract, censures nothing so sharply as the mistake of his youth in this kinde. *In adolescentia provocatus ardore & studio Scripturarum, allegoricè interpretatus sum Abdiam Prophetam, cuius historiam nesciebam*. Hee thought it one of the greatest finnes of his youth, that being carried away through an inconsiderate heate in his studies of Scripture, he aduertured to interpret *Abdias* the Prophet allegorically, when as yet hee knewe not the historicall meaning. Old men, saith our best naturall master, by

Reason of the experience of their often mistakes,
 are hardly brought constantly to affirme any thing,
 ἀλλὰ περὶ τούτων οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ λόγος, they will al-
 waies cautelously interline their speeches, with *it*
may bees, and *peradventures*, and other such parti-
 cles of warines & circumspection. This old mens
 modestie of all other things best fits vs in perusing
 those hard and obscure texts of holy Scripture.
 Out of which conceit it is that we see St *Austine*
 in his bookes *de Genesi ad litteram*, to haue written
 only by way of questions and interrogations, after
 the manner of *Aristotle* in his Problemes, *that he*
might not, (for so he giues his reason *by being over*
positive prejudice others, and *peradventure* truer in-
 terpretations: *that every one might choose according*
to his likeing, & *vbi quid intelligere non potest, Scrip-*
tura Dei det honorem, sibi timorem: and where his
 vnderstanding cannot attaine vnto the sense of it,
 let him giue that honour and reverence which is
 due vnto the Scripture, and carry himselfe with
 that awe and respect which befits him. Wherefore
 not without especial providence it is, that the ho-
 ly Ghost by St *Paul* giuing precepts to *Timothie*,
 concerning the qualitie of those who were to be
 admitted to the distributing of Gods holy word,
 expressly precribes against a *young Scholler*, *least*,
saith he, be puffed up. For as it hath beene noted
 of men, who are lately growne rich, that they dif-
 fer from other rich men only in this, ὅτι ἄλλοι τοὺς πλούτους
 ἀλλὰ οὐκ οὐκ ἀλλοι, that com-
 monly

monly they haue all the faults, that rich men haue and many more: so is it as true in those who haue lately attained to some degree and mediocritie of knowledge. Look what infirmities learned men haue, the same haue they in greater degree, & many more besides. Wherefore if *Hippocrates* in his Physician required these two things, *conuoluit*, and *conuoluit*, great industrie and long experience, the one as tillage to sow the seed, the other as time and season of the yeare to bring it to maturity: then certainly by so much the more are these two required in the spirituall Physician, by how much kee is the Physician to a more excellent part.

I will add yet one third motioner to this abuse of Scriptures, and that is the too great presumption vpon the strength and subletie of our owne wits. That which the Romane Priests sometimes told an overpleasant and wittie vestall Virgin, *Celi Deos sanctè magis quam scire*, hath in this great worke of exposition of Scripture an especial place. The holy things of God must bee handled *sanctè magis quam scire*, with feare and reverence, not with wit and daliance. The dangerous effects of this haue appeared, not in the greene tree only, in young heads, but in men of constant age, and great place in the Church. For this was that which vndid *Origen*, a man of as great learning & industrie, as ever the Church had any; whilst in sublimitie of his wit, in his Comments on Scrip-

Nicephorus.

ture, conceaving Meteors and aery speculations, he brought forth those dangerous errors, which drew vpon his person the Churches heaviest censure; and vpon posteritie the losse of his workes. Subtile witted men in nothing so much miscarrie as in the too much pleasing themselves in the goodnesse of their owne conceits; where the like sometimes befalls them which befell *Ataxia* the painter, who hauing to the life pictured an old woman, so pleas'd himselfe with the conceit of his worke that he died with laughing at it. *Helioder* Bishop of *Tricca* in *Thessaly*, the author of the *Aethiopick storie*, a polite and elegant Confesse, but a loose and wanton worke, being summon'd by a provinciall Synod, was told, that which was true, that his worke did rather endanger the manners then profit the wits of his reader, as nourishing loose and wanton conceits in the heads of youth: and hauing his choice given him either to abolish his worke, or to leaue his Bishopricke; not willing to loose the reputation of wit, chose rather to resigne his place in the Church, &c, as I verily thinke, his part in heauen. And not in private persons alone, but even in whole nations, shall wee finde remarkable examples of miscarriage in this kinde. The Grecians, till barbarisme beganne to steale in vpon them, were men of wonderous subletie of wit, and naturally over indulgent vnto themselves in this qualitie. Those deepe and subtile heresies concerning the Trinitie, the diuinitie of Christ &c

of

of the holy Ghost, the vnion and diuision of the
 diuine substance and persons, were all of them be-
 gottē in the heat of their wits: yea by the strength
 of them were they cōceaved, & borne & brought
 to that growth, that if it had beene possible for the
 gates of Hell to preuaile against the Church, they
 would haue prevailed this way. Wherefore as
 God dealt with his owne land, which being some-
 times the mirrour of the world for fertilitie and a-
 bundance of all things, now lies subiect to many
 curses, and especially to that of barrennesse: so at
 this day is it with Greece. Where sometimes was
 the flow and luxurie of wit, now is there nothing
 but extreame barbarisme and stupidity. It is in this
 respect so degenerated, that it scarcely for some hū-
 dredth of years hath brought forth a child that car-
 ries any shew of his fathers countenance. God as it
 were purposely plaguing their miserable posterity
 with extreame want of that, the abundance of
 which their fathers did so wantonly abuse. The
 reason of all, that hethereto I haue in this point de-
 liuered, is this. Sharpnesse of wit hath commonly
 with it two ill companions, pride, and leuitie. By
 the first it comes to passe that men know not how
 to yeeld to another mans reasonable positions; by
 the second, they knowe not how to keepe them-
 selues constant to their owne. It was an excellens
 obseruation of the wise Grecian, *παντες οὐκ ἀ-
 γνοῦντες* &c. Sad and dull spirited men vsually manage
 matters of state better then quicke and nimble wits.

Thucyd.

For

For such for the most part haue not learnt that
 lesson, the meaning of that voice that came to the
 Pythagorean, that was desirous to remoue the
 ashes of his dead frend out of his graue, *πῶς αὖτις
 ῥά δαμνῶ, things lawfully settled and composed must
 not be mowed. ἀνελίσσῃς ὅθεν ὁ γαμβρὸς σου καὶ
 ὁ πατήρ σου, saith Iulian. Men ouer busy are by nature
 unfit to governe. For they moue all things, & leaue
 nothing without question and innovation, ὡς αὖτις
 μίμνῃσι τὸ ἀῖμα, as Nazianzen speakes, out of
 desire to amend what is already well. And there-
 fore we see that for the most part such, if they bee
 in place of authoritie, by vnseasonable and vne-
 cessary tampering put all things into tumult and
 combustion. Not the Commonwealth alone, but
 the Church likewise hath receau'd the like blowe
 from these kinde of men. Nazianzen in his six &
 twentieth Oration, discoursing concerning the
 disorders committed in the handling of Contro-
 versies, speakes it plainely: *ὁ δὲ τοῦ διπλοῦ καὶ ποικίλου
 πνεύματος τῆς τοιαύτης αἰτίας, &c.* Great wits, hot and fierie
 dispositions haue raised these tumults. From these it is,
 (saith he) that Christians are so diuided we are no lon-
 ger a tribe and a tribe, Israel and Iudah, two parts of a
 small nation: but we are diuided kindred against kin-
 dred, family against family, yea a man against himselfe.
 But I must hasten to my second generall part, the
 persons here accounted guiltie of abuse of Scripture.*

The persons are noted vnto vs in two Epi-
 thets, vnlearned, vnstable. First, vnlearned. It was

St Ieroms

St Jerome complaint, that practitioners of other
 artes could containe themselves within the bounds
 of their owne profession, *Sola Scripturarum ars est,*
quam sibi omnes passim vendicāt. Hanc garrula anus,
hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc uni-
uersi presumunt, lacerant, docent, antequam discant:
 every one presumes much vpon his skil, and there-
 fore to be a teacher of Scripture: *ἐκ τῶν ἀδυνάτων τῶν*
ἀνθρώπων (so Nazianzen speaks) as if this great mystery of Christianitie were but
 some one of the common, base, inferior, and con-
 temprible trades. I speake not this as if I envied
 that all even the meanest of the Lords people
 should prophetic: but only that all kinde of men
 may knowe their bounds, that no vnlearned beast
 touch the hill, least hee bee thrust through with a
 dart. It is true which we haue heard, *surgunt indo-*
cti & rapiunt regnum celorum: they arise indeed,
 but it is as St Paul speakes of the resurrection, *eue-*
ry man in his owne order. Scripture is giuen to all, to
 learne: but to teach and to interpret, only to a few.
 This bold intrusion therefore of the vnlearned in-
 to the chaire of the teacher, is that which here
 with our blessed Apostle I am to reprehend. *Learn-*
ing in generall is nothing else but the competent
 skill of any man in whatsoeuer he professes. Vsuall-
 ly we call by this name onely our polite and Aca-
 demicall studies: but indeed it is common to *euery*
one, that is well skild, well practised in his owne my-
stery. The vnlearned therefore, whom here our

Apostle rebukes, is not hee that hath not read a
multiplicitie of Authors: or that is not as Moses
was, skilfull in all the learning of the Egyptians:
but he that taking vpon him to diuide the word of
God, is yet but raw and vnexperienced; or if hee
haue had experience, wants iudgement to make
vse of it. Scripture is never so vnhappy, as when it
falls into these mens fingers. That which old Cato
said of the Grecian Physicians, *quandoquidam, effu-
gens literas suas dabit, omnia corrumpet* is most true
of these men, whensoever they shall begin to tam-
per with Scripture, and vent in writing their raw
conceits, they will corrupt & defile all they touch.
*Quid enim molestia tristitia, temerarij isti prae-
sumptores,* &c. as S. Austine complaineth, for what trou-
ble and anguish these rash praisurers (saith he) bring
vnto the discreeter sort of the brethren, cannot suffi-
ciently be exprest: when being convinced of their rotten
and vngrounded opinions; for the maintaining of what
which with great leuitie and open falshood they haue
averd, they pretend the authoritie of these sacred books,
and repeat much of them even by heart, as bearing wit-
nesse to what they hold: whereas indeed they doe but
pronounce the words, but vnderstand not either what
they speake, or of what things they doe affirme. Belike
as he that bought Orpheus Harp, thought it would
of it selfe make admirable melodie, how vnskilful-
ly soever he toucht it: so these men suppose that
Scripture will sound wonderfull musically, if they
doe but strike it, with how great infelicitie or in-
congruitie

De Genesi ad
litteram.

cōgruity soever it be. The reason of these mens of-
fence against Scripture, is the same with the cause
of their miscarriage in civill actions. *Quidam* & *Sed*
Cui, saith *Thucydides*, *periculis* & *incertis*. Rude men,
men of litle experience, are commonly most perempto-
ry: but men experienced, and such as haue waded in bu-
sinesse, are slowe of determination. *Quintilian* making
a question, why unlearned men seeme many times
to be more copious then the learned (for com-
monly such men never want matter of discourse)
answers that it is because whatsoever conceit
comes into their heads, without care or choice
they broach it, *cum doctus sit electio & modus*: where-
as learned men are choice in their invention, and
lay by much of that which offers it selfe. *wise* hear-
ted men, in whom the Lord hath put wisdom and un-
derstanding to knowe how to work all manner of work
for the service of the sanctuary, like *Betzalel* and *A-*
holiab refuse much of the stuffe which is presented
them. But this kinde of men whom here our Apo-
stle notes, are naturally men of bold & daring spi-
rits, *quicquid dixerint, hoc legem Dei putant*, as *Saint*
Ierome speakes, whatsoever conceit is begotten in
their heads, the spirit of God is presently the fa-
ther of it: *non scire dignantur quid Propheta, quid A-*
postoli senserint, sed ad suum sensum incongrua aptant
testimonia. But to leaue these men, and to speake a
little more home vnto mine owne auditors: Let
vs a little consider, not the weaknesse of these men
but the greatnesse of the businesse, the manage of

which they vndertake. So great a thing as the skill of exposition of the word & Gospell is, so fraught with multiplicitie of authors, so full of varietie of opinion, must needs be confest to be a matter of great learning, and that it cannot, especially in our daies, in short time with a mediocritie of industrie be attained. For if in the Apostles times, when as yet much of Scripture was scarcely written, when God wrought with men miraculously to informe their vnderstanding, & supplied by revelatiō what mans industrie could not yeeld; if I say in these times *S^t Paul* required *diligent reading*, & expressly forbad greenesse of scholarship: much more the are these conditions required in our times, wherein God doth not supply by miracle our natural defects, and yet the burden of our profession is infinitely increast. All that was necessary in the Apostles times is now necessary and much more. For if we add vnto the growth of Christian learning, as it was in the Apostles times, but this one circumstance (to say nothing of all the rest) which naturally befalls our times, and could not be required at the hands of those who guided the first ages of the Church: that is, the knowledge of the state and succession of doctrine in the Church from time to time; a thing very necessary for the determining the controversies of these our daies: how great a portion of our labour and industrie would this alone require? Wherefore if *Quintilian* thought it necessary to admonish young men that they

they should not presume themselves *justi instru-*
ctores quæ ex his qui breues et intransferuntur, non in li-
bellum cadidissent, et velut dictum est technicorum in-
tor putant; altho thought fit thus to doe in an art of
 so inferiour and narrow a sphere; much more is it
 behoofesfull that young students in so high, so spa-
 cious, so large a profession, be advised nor to think
 themselves sufficiently provided vpon their ac-
 quaintance with some *Notitia*, or systeme of some
 technicall diuine. Looke vpon those sonnes of
Anak, those Giant-like voluminous writers of
 Rome in regard of whom our little tracts and
 pocket volumes in this kinde, what are they but as
 Grasshoppers? I speake not this like some seditions
 or factious spie, to bring weaknesse of hands, or
 melting of heart vpon any of Gods people: but
 as *the* *Campe*, to stirre vp and kindle in you the spi-
 rit of industrie, to enlarge your conceits, and not
 to suffer your labours to bee obbst and mied vp
 within the poerty of some pretended method. I
 will speake as Ioshua did to his people; *ut non*
timeatis populum istius lande, quia non est in eis virtus,
sed in seculum est decessit a facie vestra: the Lord is with
 vs, feare them not. Only let vs not thinke, *ut non*
timeatis populum istius lande, quia non est in eis virtus,
 that the conquest will be gotten
 by sitting still and wishing; altho we had the
 walls of those strong Cities, will fall downe, if we
 only walke about them, & blow rammes hornes.
 But as the voice of Gods people sometime was,
 by the sword of Gog and of Gekon, so shau which here

liue.

gines the victory must bee the grace of God and our industrie. For by this circumscribed narrow and penurious forme of studie, wee shall be no more able to keepe pace with them, then a child can with *Hercules*. But I forbear and passe awaie vnto the second epithet, by which these rackers of Scriptures, are by *St Peter* stiled: *Unstable*.

In the learning which the world teaches, it were almost a miracle to finde a man constant to his own tenents. For not to doubt in things in which wee are conuersant, is either by reason of excellency & serenitie of vnderstanding, throughly apprehending the maine principles, on which all things are grounded, together with the deserying of the severall passages from them vnto particular conclusions, and the diverticles and blind by-paths which *Sophistrie* and deceit are wont to tread: and such a man can nature never yeeld: or else it is through a senselesse stupiditie, like vnto that in the commō sort of men, who cōversing among the creatures, and beholding the course of heaven, and the heavenly host, yet never attend them, neither ever sinks it into their heads to marvaile, or question these things so full of doubt and difficultie. Even such an one is he, that learns Theologie in the schools of nature, if he seeme to participate of any solidnesse or composednesse of conscience. Either it never comes into his head to doubt of any of those things, with which the world hath inwed him: or if it doth, it is to no great purpose, he may

may smother and strangle, he can never resolve his doubt. The reason of which is this. It lies not in the worlds power to giue in this case a text of sufficient authority to compose & fix the thoughts of a soule, that is dispos'd to doubt. But this great inconvenience which held the world in vncertain- tie, by the providence of God is prevented in the Church. For vnto it is left a certaine, vndoubted; and sufficient authority, able to exalt every valley, and lay low every hill, to smooth all rubs, & make our way so open and passable, that little enquirie serues. So that as it were a wonder in the schoole of nature to find one settled and resolved: so might it seeme a marvaile that in the Church any man is vnstable, vnresolved. Yet notwithstanding even here is the vnstable mā found too, & to his charge the Apostle laies this sinne of wrestling of Scrip- ture. For since that it is confest at all hands, that the sense and meaning of Scripture is the rule and ground of our Christian tenents, whentoever we alter them, wee must needs giue a new sense vnto the word of God: So that the man that is vnstable in his religion can never be free from violating of Scripture. The especiall cause of this leuitie and fitting disposition in the common and ordinary sort of men, is their disabilitie to discerne of the strength of such reasons, as may be fram'd against them. For which cause they vsually start, and many times fall awaie, vpon every obiection that is made. In which too suddaine entertainment of

obiecti-

Seneca.

objections, they resemble the state of those who
 are lately recovered out of some long sickness; *quis
 est rati quida effugerint suspicionibus rationem inque-
 rantur; et omnem a ratione corporis sui caliginem vident.*
 Who never more wrong themselves then by
 suspecting every alteration of their temper; and be-
 ing affrighted at every little passion of heat, as if it
 were an ague fit. To bring these men therefore
 vnto an *indignus*, and to purchase them a settlednes
 of minde; that temper that *St. Augustine* doth re-
 quire in him that reads his booke; *tales morum
 scriptorum velim indices qui responsionem non sem-
 per desiderent, quum hi quae leguntur audierint al-
 quid contrarium:* the same temper must be found in
 every reader of Scripture; hee must not bee at a
 stand and require an answer to every objection that
 is made against them. For as the Philosopher tels
 vs that mad and fantastick men are very apprehen-
 sive of all outward accidents; because their
 soule is inwardly emptie and vnfurnished of any
 thing of worth which might hold the inward at-
 tention of their minds: so when wee are so easily
 dord and amated with every Sophisme, it is a cer-
 taine argument of great defect of inward furni-
 ture and worth, which should as it were ballace
 the minde and keep it vpright against all outward
 occurrents whatsoever. And be it that many times
 the means to open such doubts bee not at hand,
 yet as *St. Augustine* sometime spake vnto his scholler
licentius concerning such aduise and counsaile as

-Bolds

he

he had given him: *Nolo te causas rationesq. rãmari, quæ etiam si reddi possint, fidei saltem, quæ mihi creditur non eas debent.* so much more must we thus resolve of those lessons which God teacheth vs: the reasons and grounds of them, though they might be given, yet it fits not that credit and trust which we owe him, once to search into, or call in question. And so I come to the third generall part, the danger of wresting of Scripture, in the last wordes, *unto their owne damnation.*

The reward of every sin is death. As the worrne eates out the heart of the plant that bred it: so whatsoeuer is done amisse naturally workes no other end, but the destruction of him that doth it. As this is true in general, so is it as true, that whẽ the Scripture doth precisely note out vnto vs some sinne, and threatens death vnto it, it is commonly an argument, that there is more then ordinarie, that there is some especiall sinne, which shall drawe with it some especiall punishment. This sin of wresting of Scripture in the eie of some of the ancients seem'd so ougly, that they haue ranged it in the same ranke with the sinne against the holy Ghost. And therefore haue they pronounced it a sinne *maior* *et* *gravior*, greater then can bee pardoned. For the most part of other sinnes, are sinnes of infirmities or simplicitie, but this is a sinne of wit and strength. The man that doth it, doth it with a high hand; he knowes, and sees, and resolves vpon it. Againẽ, Scripture is the voice of God: and it is

*Isidorus Pelusi-
ota.*

2. Pet. 1. 20.

confest by all that the sense is Scripture, rather the words. It cannot therefore be avoided, but hee that wilfully strives to fasten some sense of his owne vpon it, other then the very nature of the place will beare, must needs take vpon him the person of God, & become a new inditer of Scripture; and all that applaud and giue content vnto any such, in effect cry the same that the people did to Herod, *the voice of God, and not of man*. If he then that abases the Princes come deserves to die, what is his desert that instead of the tried silver of Gods word stamps the name and character of God vpon *Nebuchstan*, vpon base brassen stuffe of his owne? Thirdly, *No Scripture is of private interpretation*, saith the Apostle. There can therefore be but two certaine and infallible interpreters of Scripture: either it selfe; or the holy Ghost the author of it. It selfe doth then expound it selfe, when the wordes & circumstances doe sound vnto vs the prime, and naturall, and principall sense. But when the place is obscure, involu'd and intricate, or when there is contain'd some secret and hidden mystery, beyond the prime sense; infallibly to shew vs this, there can be no interpreter but the holy Ghost that gaue it. Besides these two, all other interpretation is private. Wherefore as the Lords of the Philistines sometimes said of the kine that drew the arke vnto Bethshemesh: *If they goe of themselves, then is this from God; but if they goe another way, then is it not from God; it is some chance that hath hapned vnto vs*

so

so may it bee said of all pretended sense of Scrip-
 ture. If Scripture come vnto it of it selfe, then is it
 of God: but if it goe another way, or if it bee vio-
 lently vrged and goaded on, then is it but a matter
 of chance, of mans wit & invention. As for those
 marvailous discourses of some, fram'd vpon pre-
 sumption of the spirits helpe in private, in iudging
 or interpreting of difficult places of Scripture, I
 must needs confesse I haue often wondred at the
 boldnesse of them. The spirit is a thing of dark &
 secret operation, the maner of it none can descrie.
 As vnderminers are never scene till they haue
 wrought their purpose; so the spirit is never per-
 ceaued but by its effects. The effects of the spirit
 (as farre as they concerne knowledge and instru-
 ction) are not particular information for resolu-
 tion in any doubtfull case (for this were plainly
 revelation) but as the Angell, which was sent vnto
Cornelius informes him not, but sends him to *Peter*
 to schoole: so the spirit teaches not, but stirs vp
 in vs a desire to learne: Desire to learne makes vs
 thirst after the meanes: and pious sedulitie & care-
 fulnesse makes vs watchfull in the choice, and dili-
 gent in the vse of our meanes. The promise to the
 Apostles of the spirit which should lead them in-
 to all truth, was made good vnto them by private
 and secret informing their vnderstandings, with
 the knowledge of high and heavenly mysteries,
 which as yet had never entred into the conceit of
 any man. The same promise is made to vs, but ful-

fill'd after another manner. For what was written
 by revelation in their hearts, for our instruction
 haue they written in their bookes. To vs for infor-
 mation, otherwise then out of these bookes, the
 spirit speaks not. Whē the spirit regenerats a mā,
 it infuses no knowledge of any point of faith, but
 sends him to the Church and to the Scriptures.
 When it stirres him up to newnesse of life, it exhi-
 bits not vnto him an inventory of his finnes, as hi-
 ther to vnknowne; but either supposes the knowne
 in the law of nature, of which no man can bee ig-
 norant; or sends him to learne them from the
 mouth of his teachers. More then this in the or-
 dinary proceeding of the holy spirit, in matter of
 instruction, I yet could never deseribe. So that to
 speake of the helpe of the spirit in private, either
 in dijudicating, or in interpreting of Scripture, is
 to speake they knowe not what. Which I doe the
 rather note, first, because by experience we haue
 learnt, how apt men are to call their private con-
 ceits, the spirit. And againe, because it is the etpe-
 ciall errour, with which *S. Austine* long agoe char-
 ged this kinde of men: *into sunt ad seditionem fac-
 tores, quanto sibi videntur spiritu excellere*: by so
 much the more prone are they to kindle schisme
 and contention in the Church, by how much they
 seeme to themselves to bee endued with a more
 eminent measure of spirit then their brethren;
 whilst it openethen *inquit* *Cor in eam* *uaguetur*,
 (as *S. Basile* speakes) under pretense of interpretati-

on they violently breach their owne conceits. Great then is the danger in which they wade, which take vpon them this businesse of interpretationem *ut ad asserenda incerta dubiaq. opinionis*, saith St. Augustine, *difficile sacre legē crimen evitat*: the rashnesse of those that averre vncertaine and doubtfull interpretations for Catholike and absolute, can hardly escape the sinne of sacrilege.

But whereas our Apostle saith, *their owne destruction*, is the destruction onely their owne? this were well if it stretched no farther. The ancients much complaine of this offence, as an hinderer of the salvation of others. There were in the daies of *Isidorus Pelusiota* some that gaue out that all in the old Testament was spoken of Christ: belike out of extreame oppositiō to the *Manichees*, who on the other side saugh, that no text in the old Testament did foretell of Christ. That Father therefore dealing with some of that opinion, tels them how great the danger of their tenent is. *ut dicitur in libro signaturā in hisce scriptis q. 74. dicitur signaturā in hisce scriptis* *et dicitur* for if, saith he, we strue with violence to drame and apply those texts to Christ, which apparently pertaine not to him, we shall gaine nothing but this, to make all the places that are spoken of him suspected; and so discredit the strength of other testimonies, which the Church useth to argue for the refutation of the Iewes. For in these cases a wrested prooffe is like vnto a suborned witness. It never doeth helpe so much, whilest it is presumed to bee strong,

g.

as it doth hurt when it is discovered to bee weak.
St. Augustine in his bookes *de Genesi ad litteram* sharply
 reprooves some Christians, who out of some
 places of Scripture misvnderstood, fram'd vnto
 themselves a kinde of knowledge in Astronomie
 and Phisicologie, quite contrary vnto some parts
 of heathen learning in this kinde, which were true
 and evident vnto sense. A man would thinke that
 this were but a small error, and yet hee doubts
 not to call it *perpeuum, & perniciosum & maxime
 cavendum*. His reason warrants the roundnesse of
 his reproofe. For he charges such to haue beene a
 scandall vnto the word, and hinderers of the con-
 version of some heathen men that were schollars.
For how, saith he, *shall they beleene our bookes of Scrip-
 ture perswading the resurrection of the dead, the king-
 dome of heauen, and the rest of the mysteries of our pro-
 fession, if they finde them faultie in these things, of
 which themselves haue undeniable demonstration?*
 yea though the cause wee maintaine bee never so
 good, yet the issue of diseas'd and crazie proofes
 brought to maintaine it, must needs bee the same.
 For vnto all causes, be they never so good, weak-
 nesse of proofe, when it is discovered, brings great
 prejudice, but vnto the cause of religion most of
 all. *St. Augustine* obseru'd that there were some *qui
 cum de aliquibus, qui sanctum nomen profitentur, ali-
 quid criminis vel falsi sonuerit, vel veri patuerit,
 instant sagacius, ambigunt ut de omnibus hoc creda-
 tur: it fares no otherwise with religion it selfe, the*

it death with the professors of it. Diverse malignants there are, who lie in wait to espie where our reasons on which we build are weak; and having prehended it in some, will earnestly solicit the world to beleue that all are so, if means were made to bring it to light: as *Nicodemus* did, who layed his hands upon him, and sought to kill him: as *Alexander* speaks, vying for advantage against vs no strength of their owne, but the vice and imbecillitie of our defence. The booke of the Revelation is a booke full of wonder and mystery: the ancients seeme to haue made a religion to meddle with it, and thought it much better to admire it with silence, then to adventure to expound it; and therefore amongst their labours in exposition of Scripture, scarcely is there any one found that hath toucht it. But our age hath taken better heart, and scarcely any one is there who hath entertained a good conceit of his owne abilities, but he hath taken that booke as a fit argument to spend his paines on. That the Church of Rome hath great cause to suspect her selfe, so feare least shee haue a great part in the prophecies of that booke, I think the most partiall wil not deny. Yet vnto the expositors of it, I will giue this aduise, that they look that that befall not them, which *Thucydides* obserues to befall the common sort of men: who though they haue good meane to acquit themselves like men, yet when they thinke their best hopes faile them, and beginne to despaire of their
strength

strength, comfort themselves with interpretations of certaine darke & obscure prophecies. Many plaine texts of Scripture are very pregnant, & of sufficient strength to overthrowe the points maintained by that Church against vs. If we leaue these, and ground our selues vpon our private expositions of this booke; wee shall insly seeme in the povertie of better proofes, to rest our selues vpon those prophecies; which, though in themselves they are most certaine, yet our expositions of them must, (except God giue yet further light vnto his Church) necessarily bee mixt with much vncertaintie, as being at the best but vnprobable coniectures of our owne. Scarsly can there be found a thing more harmefull to religion, then to vent thus our own conceits, and obtrude them vpon the world for necessary and absolute. The Physicians skill as I conceaue of it, stands as much on opinion, as any that I knowe, whatsoever. Yet their greatest master Hippocrates tells them directly, *ἰσχυρὰ μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ γνώμη, ὀλιγὰ δὲ τὰ γεγονότα*, &c. *When the Physicians presumption vpon opinion, there is not one thing that brings either more blame to himselfe or danger to his patients.* If it be thus in an art which opinion taken away, must needs fall; how little roome then must opinion haue in that knowledge, where nothing can haue place but what is of eternal truth? where if once we admit of opinion all is overthrowne? But I conclude this point, adding onely this generall admonition, that we be not too peremporie

in

in our positions, where expresse text of Scripture failes vs: that we lay not our owne collections & conclusions with too much precipirancie. For experience hath shewd vs, that the error and weaknesse of them being afterwards discovered brings great disadvantage to Christianitie, and trouble to the Church. The Easterne Church before *St. Basils* time, had entertained generally a conceit, that those greeke particles *in, Cum, Pro* and the rest, were so divided among the Trinitie, that each of the persons had his particle which was no way applicable to the rest. *St. Basil* having discovered this to be but a nicenesse and needlesse curiositie, beginning to teach so, rais'd in the Church such a tumult, that hee brought vpon him selfe a great labour of writing many tracts in apologie for him selfe, with much adoe, care matters could againe be serled. The fault of this was not in *Basil*, who religiously fearing what by way of consequence might ensue vpo an error, taught a truth, but in the Church, who formerly had with too much facilitie admitted a conclusion so iustly subiect to exception. And let this suffice for our third part.

Now because it is apparant that the end of this our Apostles admonition is to giue the Church a caveat how shee behaue her selfe in handling of Scripture, giue me leaue a little, instead of the vse of such doctrines as I haue formerly laid downe, to shew you, as farre as my conceit can stretch, what course any man may take to saue himselfe

E

from

from offering violence vnto Scripture, and reasonably settle himselfe, any pretended obscuritie of the text whatsoever notwithstanding. For which purpose the diligent obseruing of two rules shall bee thoroughly available. First, *The literall plaine, and vntcontroverfable meaning of Scripture without any addition or supply by way of interpretation; is that alone which for ground of faith we are necessarily bound to accept, except it bee there where the holy Ghost himselfe treads vs out another waie.* I take not this to bee any peculiar conceit of mine, but that vnto which our Church stands necessarily bound. When wee receded from the Church of Rome, one motiue was, because she added vnto Scripture her glosses as Canonickall, to supply what the plaine text of Scripture could not yeeld. If in place of hers, wee set vp our owne glosses, thus to doe, were nothing else but to pull downe Baal; and set vp an Ephod; to runne round, and meet the Church of Rome againe in the same point, in which at first wee left her. But the plaine, evident and demonstratiue ground of this rule, is this. That authoritie which doth warrant our faith vnto vs, must every way be free from all possibilitie of errour. For let vs but once admit of this, that there is any possibility that any one point of faith should not be true; if it bee once granted that I may bee deceaued in what I haue beleueed; how can I be assur'd that in the end I shall not be deceaued? If the author of faith may alter: or if the evidence and assurance that hee hath

hath left vs be not pregnant, and impossible to bee defeated; there is necessarily opened an inlet to doubtfullnesse and waucring, which the nature of faith excludes. That faith therefore may stand vnshaken, two things are of necessitie to concurre. First, that the author of it bee such a one, as can by no meanes be deceaued, and this can bee none but God. Secondly that the words and text of this author vpon whom we ground, must admit of no ambiguitie, no vncertainetie of interpretation. *If the trumpet giue an vncertaine sound, who shall provide him selfe to battle.* If the words admit a double sense, and I follow one, who can assure mee that that which I followe is the truth? For infallibility either in iudgement, or interpretation, or whatsoever, is annex neither to the see of any Bishop, nor to the Fathers, nor to the Councells, nor to the Church; nor to any created power whatsoever. This doctrine of the litterall sense was never greivous or prejudiciall to any, but onely to those who were inwardly conscious, that their positions were not sufficiently grounded. When *Cardinall Caietan* in the daies of our grandfathers had forsaken that vaine of postilling and allegorising on Scripture, which for a long time had prevailed in the Church, and betaken him selfe vnto the litterall sense: it was a thing so distastfull vnto the Church of Rome, that hee was forc'd to finde out many shifts, & make many apologies for him selfe. The truth is (as it will appeare to him that reads

his writings) this sticking close to the literal sense was that alone, which made him to shake many of those tenents, vpon which the Church of Rome and the reformed Churches differ. But when the importunitie of the reformers, and the great credit of *Calvins* writings in that kinde, had forced the diuines of Rome to leuell their interpretations by the same line: when they saw that no paines, no subtiltie of wit was strong enough to defeat the literall evidence of Scripture: it draue them on those desperate shelses, on which at this daie they sticke, to call in question, as farre as they durst, the credit of the Hebrew text, & countenance against it a corrupt translation; to add traditions vnto Scripture; and to make the Churches interpretation, so pretended, to bee about exception. As for that restriction which is vsually added to this rule, that the literall sense is to be taken; if no absurdity follow, though I acknowledge it to be sound and good, yet my aduise is that we entertaine it warily. *St Basil* thought the precept of Christ to the rich man in the Gospell, *Goe sell all thou hast and giue vnto the poore*; to be spoken as a command vniuersally and eternally binding all Christians without exception. And making this obiection, how possibly such a life could bee amongst Christians, since where all are sellars, none could be buyers: *μὴ ἵστανται* (saith he) *τίδ' ἀνδρῶν τὸν ἀμύνητον νόμον*, &c. *Aske not me the sense of my Lords commands. He that gaue the law, can provide to giue it possibilitie of being*

being kept without any absurditie at all. Which speech, howsoever we may suppose the occasion of it to be mistaken; yet is it of excellent vse, to repress our boldnesse, whereby many times, vnder pretence of some inconvenience, we hinder Scripture from that latitude of sense, of which it is naturally capable. You knowe the story of the Roman captaine in *Gellius*, and what hee told the shipwright, that chose rather to interpret, then to execute his Lords command: *Corrumpti atq; dissoluti omne imperantis officium, si quis ad id quod facere iussus est non obsequio debito, sed consilio non desiderato respondeat*. It will certainly in the end proue safer for vs to entertaine Gods Commandements *obsequio debito*, then to interpret them *acumine non desiderato*. Those other waies of interpretation, whether it be by allegorizing, or allusion or whatsoever, the best that can bee said of them is that which *Basil* hath pronounced: *ὡς καὶ οἱ δούλοι οὗ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως ἀποδεχόμεθα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς αὐτοὺς διδάσκου*. We account of them as of trimme, elegant, and wittie speeches, but we refuse to accept of them, as of vndoubted truthe. And though of some part of these that may bee said which one said of his owne worke, *quod ad vsum lusi, quod ad molestiam laboravi*, in respect of any profit comes by them, they are but sport, but in respect of the paines taken in making of them they are labour and travaile: yet much of them is of excellent vse in private, either to raise our affections, or to spend our meditations, or (so it bee

*Augustinus in
monast.*

with modestie) to practise our gifts of wit to the honour of him that gaue them. For if wee absolutely condemne these interpretations, then must we condemne a great part of antiquitie, who are very much conversant in this kinde of interpreting. For the most partiall for antiquitie cannot chuse but see and confesse thus much, that for the littrell sense the Interpreters of our owne times, because of their skill in the originall languages, their care of pressing the circumstances and coherence of the text, of comparing like places of Scripture with like, haue generally surpasst the best of the ancients. Which I speake not to discountenance antiquitie, but that all ages, all persons may haue their due. And let this suffice for our first rule.

The Jewish *Rabbines* in their Comments on Scripture so oft as they met with hard and intricate texts, out of which they could not wrest the selues, were wont to shut vp their discourse with this, *Elias cum venerit, soluet dubia*: Elias shall answer this doubt when he comes. Not the Iewes only, but the learned Christians of all ages haue found many things in Scripture which yet expect *Elias*. For besides those texts of Scriptures, which by reason of the hidden treasures of wisdom, and depth of sense & mysterie laid vp in them, are not yet conceau'd, there are in Scripture of things that are *uice uerſe*, seemingly confus'd, inuolup'd, carrying semblance of contrarietie, anachronismes, meta-
chronismes,

chronismes, and the like, which bring infinite obscuritie to the text: there are I say in Scripture more of them, then in any writing that I knowe secular or divine. If wee meane not to settle our selues till all these things are answered, let vs take heed least the like be said to vs, which *S^r Austine* said to some of the Gentiles, who refused to beleue till all obiections were satisfied: *sunt enim innumerabiles quæ non sunt finiendæ ante fidem, ne vitæ finiatur sine fide.* The *Areopagites* in *Athens*, whē they durst not proceed to sentence, were wont *causam in diem longissimam differre*, to put it off till a day of hearing for some hundreth yeares after, avoiding by this meanes the further being importun'd with the suit. To quiet our selues in these doubts it will be our best way *in diem longissimam differre*, to put them to some day of hearing a farre off, even till that great day, till Christ our true *Elias* shall come, who at his comming shal answer all our doubts, and settle all our waverings. Meane while till our *Elias* come, let vs make vse of this second rule. *In places of ambiguous and doubtfull, or darke and intricate meaning, it is sufficient if we religiously admire and acknowledge and confesse: vsing that moderation of Austine: Neutram partem affirmantes siue destruentes, sed tantummodo ab audaci affirmandi presumptione revocantes. Qui credit, faith one, satis est illi quod Christus intelligat.* To understand belongs to Christ the author of our faith, to

§

vs.

vs is sufficient the glory of beleeuing. Wherefore we are to aduise, not so much how to attaine vnto the vnderstanding of the mysteries of Scripture; as how it best fits vs to carry our selues when either the difficultie of the text, or varietie of opinions shall distract vs. In the sixth generall Councell *Honorius* Bishop of *Rome* is condemned for a *Monothelite*. Two Epistles there are of his which are produc'd to giue evidence against him. For the first I haue nothing to say. For the second (I speak with submission to better iudgement) notwithstanding the sharpe proceeding of the Councell against him, I verily suppose that hee giues vnto the Church the best counsaile, that ever yet was giuen for the serling of doubts, and finall decision of controversie. For that which he teaches in that Epistle, at least in thole parts of it, which there are brought, sounds to no other purpose but this: *That whereas there was lately raised in the Church a controversie concerning the dualitie or vnitie of wils in Christ; since that hitherto nothing in the Church concerning either part hath beene exprestly taught, his counsaile was that men would rather cease to doubt, then to be curious to search for any solution of their doubtings; and so abstaine from teaching doctrinally either part, and content themselves with that expresse measure of faith, with which the Church hath hitherto rest satisfied.* This to my conceit is the drift of his Epistle. How this aduise of the Bishops was applicable or how it fitted the question then in controversie

troverſie, for what reaſon moued the Councell to thinke that it was abſolutely neceſſary for them, to giue an expreſſe deciſion, and determine for the one part, belongs not to me to diſcuſſe. But I verily perſwade my ſelfe, that if it had pleaſed thoſe, who in all ages haue bene ſet to governe the Church of God, betimes to haue made uſe of this aduiſe, to haue taught men rather not to haue doubted, then to haue expected ſtill ſolution of their doubtings: to haue ſtopt and damm'd vp the originals and ſprings of controverſies, rather then by determining for the one part, to giue them as it were a pipe and conduit to conuaie them to poſteritie, I perſwade my ſelfe the Church had not ſuffered that inuadation of opinions, with which at this day it is overrunne. Is it not *St Pauls* owne praſtiſe, when hauing brought in a queſtion concerning Gods iuſtice in predeſtination, hee giues no other anſwere but this, *O man, who art thou that diſputeſt with God?* Is it not his plaine purpoſe to aduiſe the diſputer rather not to make the queſtion, then to require a determination of it at his hands? How many of the queſtions even of our owne times, even of thoſe that are at home amongſt vs, might by this way long ſince haue bene determin'd? I haue, I confeſſe, the ſame diſeaſe that my firſt parents in Paradife had, a deſire to knowe more then I need. But I alwaies thought it a very iudicious commendation, which is given to *L. Agriſola*, that hee knewe how to bridle his de-

sine in pursuit of knowledge, *retinens, quod est dif-*
ficillimum, ex scientia monum. Mallem quidem (as St
Austine saith) eorum qua à me quaesisti habere sci-
entiam, quam ignorantiam; sed quia id non alium potui,
magis eligo eantam ignorantiam confiteri, quam fal-
sam scientiam profiteri. It shall well besit our Chri-
 stian modestie to participate somewhat of the
 Sceptike, and to vse their *tribun*, till the *origina* and
 remainder of our knowledge bee supplied by
 Christ. *In quem sic credimus; ut si aliquis nobis non*
aperiat etiam pulsantibus, nullo modo aduersus eum
murmurare debeamus. To conclude. St Austine in
 his eightieth Epistle discoursing of the speedie or
 slow comming of our Saviour to iudgement, to
 shew that it is the safest waie to teach neither, but
 to suspend our beleefe, & confesse our ignorance,
 ranging himselfe with men of this tēper, *obsecrote*
 (saith he to *Hesychius*, to whom he writes that Epi-
 stle) *obsecrote ut me talem non spernas.* So giue me
 leaue to cōmence the same suit to you: *obf. ero vos*
ut me talem nō spernatis. Let me request you beare
 with me, if I be such a one, as I haue St Austine for
 example. For it is not depth of knowledge, nor
 knowledge of antiquitie, or sharpnesse of wit, nor
 authority of Cōuocels, nor the name of the church
 can settle the restless conceits, that possesse the
 mindes of many doubtfull Christians: onely to
 ground for faith on the plaine vncontroverfable
 text of Scripture, and for the rest to expect and
 pray for the comming of our *Elias*, this shall com-
 pose

pose our waverings, and giue final rest vnto our
soules.

Thus instead of a discourse which was due vn-
to this time, concerning the glorious resurrection
of our blessed Saviour, and the benefits that come
vnto vs by it, I haue diuerted my selfe vpon ano-
ther theame, more necessary as I thought for this
auditorie, though lesse agreeable with this solem-
nitie. Those who haue gone afore mee in that ar-
gument haue made so copious a harvest, that the
issue of my gatherings must needs haue beene but
small, except I had with *Ruth* gleaned out of their
sheaues, or strained my industrie which is but small,
and my wits which are none, to haue held your at-
tentiuenesse with new and quaint conceits. In the
meane time, whether it be I or they, or whatsoe-
uer hath beene deliuered out of this place,

God grant that it may bee for his ho-
nour, and for the Churches
good, to whom both it &

wee are dedicate.

To God the

Father,

&c.

FINIS